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APPLICATION

FOR

UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

TITLE: Paper Plate Beverage Holder

INVENTOR: Edmond Heng Lim

Paper Plate Beverage Holder

This application claims benefit of the priority date of Provisional Patent 60/482,246 that was filed on June 17, 2003 by the same inventor.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention:

The present invention, in general relates to paper plates and, more particularly, to an extension of a paper plate that is adapted for holding a beverage.

Paper plates are well known disposable plates made of paper stock that are intended for a single use. While most are generally round in appearance, some are oval. Some have deep recesses and resemble serving bowls. Most have a shallow recess and resemble a dinner plate.

Paper plates are commonly used at picnics, parties, and by food vendors. They stack well one on top of the other and therefore occupy little space. However, there is no way to hold a beverage safely and securely. For example, a can of

soda, if placed in the center of a paper plate is prone to tipping and spillage.

There is a long standing need for a paper plate that can hold a beverage.

Accordingly, there exists today a need for a paper plate beverage holder.

Clearly, such an apparatus would be a useful and desirable device.

2. Description of Prior Art:

Paper plates are, in general, known.

U.S. Patent 6,702,141 to Cinque that issue March 9, 2004 provides a structure that can accept a paper tray as an accessory, but it fails to provide beverage holding capability for a paper plate.

A paper plate with a hole in the center is known for accepting a tapered drink container, however it cannot

secure a cylindrically-shaped beverage container, for example, a can of soda, and the opening in the center of the plate detracts from food carrying capacity when the tapered drink container is present and it provides an opening for food to fall through whenever the drink container is not disposed in the opening.

While the structural arrangements of the known devices may, at first appearance, have similarities with the present invention, they differ in material respects. These differences, which will be described in more detail hereinafter, are essential for the effective use of the invention and which admit of the advantages that are not available with the prior devices.

OBJECTS AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to provide a paper plate beverage holder that is economical to manufacture.

It is also an important object of the invention to provide a paper plate beverage holder that is disposable after use.

Another object of the invention is to provide a paper plate beverage holder that can be adapted to be manufactured of materials other than paper, thereby providing a more durable and reusable device.

Still another object of the invention is to provide a paper plate beverage holder that can be added to existing plates.

Still yet another object of the invention is to provide a paper plate beverage holder that can be included in the manufacture of a new paper plate as a component part thereof.

Yet another important object of the invention is to provide a paper plate beverage holder that is strong enough to support a beverage as well as foodstuff.

Still yet another important object of the invention is to provide a paper plate beverage holder that is adapted to hold a beverage that is disposed in a tapered container.

A first continuing object of the invention is to provide a paper plate beverage holder that is adapted to

hold a beverage that is disposed in a cylindrical container, for example, a soda can.

Briefly, a paper plate beverage holder that is constructed in accordance with the principles of the present invention has a paper plate of any basic desired shape that includes an extended portion. The extended portion includes a circular cutout for receiving a beverage container therein. The extended portion includes a pair of beverage support members that are adapted to be bent (i.e., to pivot) down underneath the plane of the extended portion and beneath the circular cutout. A third beverage support member is a cross-member that is pivotally attached to a lower end of the pair of beverage support members and, when disposed under the circular cutout, forms a shelf that is adapted to support the bottom of the beverage container.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a top view of a paper plate beverage holder as manufactured prior to a final assembly for usage.

FIG. 2 is a side view of the paper plate beverage holder of **FIG. 1** taken on the line 2-2 with a pair of added beverage containers disposed therein.

FIG. 3 is a side view of a modified paper plate beverage holder.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring to both **FIG. 1** and **FIG. 2** is shown, a paper plate beverage holder, identified in general by the reference numeral 10.

A conventional type of a paper plate 12 is disposed under the beverage holder 10.

The beverage holder 10 includes a section of overlap, identified in general by the reference numeral 14. The section of overlap 14 is that portion of the beverage holder as shown in **FIG. 1** that overlaps a portion of an upper rim 16 of the paper plate 12. It extends from an inside of the upper rim 16 to outside of the upper rim 16, as indicated by

the dashed line which shows a portion of the edge of the paper plate 12 under the beverage holder.

The section of overlap 14 can be larger or smaller than shown. The section of overlap 14 includes an adhesive 18 that adheres it to a portion of a top surface of the upper rim 16.

It is preferred to include a peel-off strip 20 that is removed from the section of overlap 14 of the beverage holder 10 to expose the adhesive 18. The section of overlap 14 is then placed on top of the upper rim 16, to which it adheres. In the **FIG. 2** illustration, the peel-off strip 20 has been removed from the section of overlap 14, which has been adhered to the upper rim 16.

If the paper plate 12 is circular, as shown, the section of overlap 14 can be placed anywhere along the upper rim 16. If the paper plate 12 included another shape, for example oval, then the section of overlap 14 would be modified to conform to the shape of the paper plate 12. If the shape of the paper plate 12 is asymmetrical, then the section of overlap 14 can only be properly applied if it is placed over a correspondingly shaped portion of the upper

rim 16. If the paper plate 12 were oval, then the section of overlap 14 could be placed on either end, for example.

The section of overlap 14 can extend, if desired, fully around the circumference of the upper rim 16 of the paper plate 12. This is useful if the paper plate 12 is of especially thin stock or if extra strength is desired.

The section of overlap 14, the adhesive 18, and the portion of the upper rim 16 that are placed proximate each other are in parallel planar alignment with respect to each other. Together, they form a laminated area that matches the area in the section of overlap 14.

The laminated area greatly reinforces the strength of both the paper plate 12 and the beverage holder 10 in the section of overlap 14. This makes any portion of the paper plate 12 or of the beverage holder 10 that is proximate the section of overlap 14 considerably stronger as well, due the reinforcement and increased rigidity provided by the laminate area.

A remaining portion of the beverage holder 10, other than the section of overlap 14, is that portion which extends beyond the normal size (i.e., beyond the upper rim

16) of the paper plate 12. This remaining portion, which is described in greater detail hereinafter, when the beverage holder 10 is attached to the paper plate 12, generally forms an extended portion because it extends beyond the original size of the paper plate 12.

The beverage holder 10 includes a first edge 22 and a second edge 24, both of which extend away from the paper plate 12 and generally toward each other. A radius 26 extends at an end of the beverage holder 10 that is opposite the section of overlap 14 from the first edge 22 to the second edge 24, thereby defining the overall size of the beverage holder 10 prior to its final assembly for use, as shown in **FIG. 1**.

An opening 28 is provided in the beverage holder 10. The opening 28 is disposed so that an edge thereof is disposed as close as possible to the section of overlap 14, and therefore as close as possible to outside edge of the upper rim 16. Placement of the opening 28 beginning proximate the end of the laminated area helps to increase the strength of the beverage holder 10 near the opening 28.

A first cut line 30 extends through the beverage holder 10 beginning at a first end 30a thereof near a center line

31 of the opening 28 and extending generally in a direction toward the radius 26 and somewhat parallel with the first edge 22. A distal second end 30b of the first cut line 30 is disposed in the beverage holder 10 proximate the radius 26 but not extending out to the radius 26. The first cut line 30 is cut completely through the beverage holder 10 along its entire length.

A second cut line 32 extends through the beverage holder 10 beginning at a first end 32a thereof near the center line 31 of the opening 28 and extending generally in a direction toward the radius 26 and somewhat parallel with the second edge 24. A distal second end 32b of the second cut line 32 is disposed in the beverage holder 10 proximate the radius 26 but not extending out to the radius 26. The second cut line 32 is cut completely through the beverage holder 10 along its entire length.

A third cut line 34 extends from the first cut line 30 to the second cut line 32 and is generally parallel with the centerline 31 of the opening 28. The third cut line 34 intersects the first cut line 30 proximate the distal second end 30b thereof and the third cut line 34 intersects the second cut line 32 proximate the distal second end 32b

thereof. The third cut line 34 is cut completely through the beverage holder 10 along its entire length.

Beginning at the first end 30a of the first cut line 30 and extending away from the opening 28 to the first edge 22 is a first score line 36, as shown in dashed lines. The first score line 36 aligns generally with the centerline 31 of the opening 28.

The first score line 36 may be formed in a number of possible ways, any of which can be used alone or in combination. For example, the first score line 36 may include a crease that is impressed into the beverage holder 10 or it may include a series of perforations through the beverage holder 10. As is described in greater detail hereinafter, a final assembly procedure will cause a bending of a portion of the beverage holder 10 at the first score line 36. The crease or perforations help facilitate this bending.

Beginning at the second end 30b of the first cut line 30 and extending in a direction that is parallel with the first score line 36 and extending to the first edge 22 is a second score line 38, as shown in dashed lines. The second

score line 38 is formed similar to that of the first score line 36.

On the opposite side of the beverage holder 10, beginning at the first end 32a of the second cut line 32 and extending away from the opening 28 to the second edge 24 is a third score line 40, as shown in dashed lines. The third score line 40 also aligns generally with the centerline 31 of the opening 28 and with the first score line 36. The third score line 40 is formed similar to that of the first score line 36.

Beginning at the second end 32b of the second cut line 32 and extending in a direction that is parallel with the third score line 40 and extending to the second edge 24 is a fourth score line 42, as shown in dashed lines. The fourth score line 42 is formed similar to that of the first score line 36.

A first beverage support member 44 is formed by the first cut line 30 and by the first and second score lines 36, 38 and is contained within these lines.

A second beverage support member 46 is disposed on an opposite side of the beverage holder 10 and is formed by the

second cut line 32 and by the third and fourth score lines 40, 42 and is contained within these lines.

A third beverage support member 48 is formed by the third cut line 34, a small portion of the first cut line 30 proximate its distal second end 30b, the second score line 38, a small portion of the second cut line 32 proximate its distal second end 32b, and by the fourth score line 42.

All of the cut lines 30, 32, 34 and all of the score lines 36, 38, 40, 42 are formed during manufacture of the beverage holder 10. The beverage holders 10 are stacked flat, one on top of the other, and shipped in quantity.

To use the beverage holder 10, it is removed from the stack by a user (not shown) and the peel-off strip 20 is removed, thereby exposing the adhesive 18. The section of overlap 14 is then placed into contact with the top of the upper rim 16, thereby securing the beverage holder 10 to the paper plate 12. This is always accomplished.

However, a final assembly procedure is accomplished when cylindrical shaped beverage containers are to be supported by the beverage holder 10. To accomplish the final assembly procedure, the third beverage support member 48 is

grasped by the user and is urged in a generally downward direction, as shown in **FIG. 2** by arrow 50 until the first beverage support member 44 and the second beverage support member 46 are disposed under a plane of the beverage holder 10 that aligns with the section of overlap 14. After final assembly, the first beverage support member 44 and the second beverage support member 46 are generally parallel with respect to each other and are each perpendicular with respect to the plane of the beverage holder 10. In this position, the third beverage support member 48 is disposed under the opening 28.

A can of soda 52 is placed in the opening 28. It passes through the opening until a bottom of the can of soda 52 contacts the upper surface of the third beverage support member 48. The first and second beverage support members 44, 46 support both the third beverage support member 48 as well as the can of soda 52. The can of soda 52, which is cylindrical in shape and which has straight sides, cannot fall out of the opening 28.

Accordingly, if the can of soda 52, or any beverage container (not shown) that could possibly fall through the opening 28 is to be supported by the beverage holder 10, the final assembly procedure is required in order to position

the third beverage support member 48 underneath the opening 28.

The weight of the can of soda 52 actually helps ensure that the third beverage support member 48 cannot rise enough to pivot out of its position underneath the opening 28.

The score lines 36, 38, 40, 42 make it easier to accomplish the final assembly procedure. Any of the score lines 36, 38, 40, 42 are formed on either or both sides of the beverage holder 10, as desired, to optimally facilitate the pivoting of the third beverage support member 48 under the opening 28. Certain of the score lines 36, 38, 40, 42 may be formed on one side while others thereof are formed on the opposite side of the beverage holder 10.

The final assembly procedure is not always required in order to utilize the beverage holder 10. **FIG. 2** illustrates the beverage holder 10 for use after the final assembly procedure has been accomplished and the third beverage support member 48 is disposed under the opening 28 supporting the can of soda 52.

FIG. 2 also illustrates the beverage holder 10 for use without accomplishing the final assembly procedure. If a

large tapered beverage container 54 that includes a generally frusta-conical shape where a lower portion includes a diameter that is smaller than that of the opening 28, and therefore able to pass through the opening 28, and which tapers to an upper portion that includes a diameter that is larger than that of the opening 28, the final assembly procedure is not accomplished.

It will take a food or beverage vendor or a person at a home party or picnic only a moment to determine whether or not the final assembly procedure is required. When the large tapered beverage container 54 is used, it is inserted in the opening until its increasing diameter circumference creates a friction fit intermediate the opening 28. When the friction fit has sufficiently increased in magnitude, the large tapered beverage container 54 is retained in position within the opening 28.

The final assembly procedure is not accomplished in this instance because the third beverage support member 48 might contact the bottom of the large tapered beverage container 54 and prevent its full insertion into the opening 28 from occurring.

Referring now to **FIG. 3**, is shown a modified paper plate beverage holder, identified in general by the reference numeral 100.

The modified beverage holder 100 is substantially identical to that which has been described hereinabove, except it is manufactured as a one-piece assembly. A modified paper plate 102 is formed so as to include a modified beverage extension portion, identified in general by the reference numeral 104.

The modified beverage extension portion 104 is constructed identical to that of the beverage holder 10, except the peel-off strip 20 and adhesive 18 are not required because the modified beverage holder 100 is a one-piece assembly. The modified beverage holder 100 does not include the section of overlap 14 (**FIG. 1**) and therefore does not have a laminate area that provides additional strength. Accordingly, a heavier paper stock is generally required for the modified beverage holder 100 than for the beverage holder 10.

It is also possible to form the beverage holder 10 or the modified beverage holder 100 out of materials other than paper. Paper is typical, inexpensive, and disposable. If a

more durable version was preferred plastic, for example, could be used. The plastic beverage holder 10 or plastic modified beverage holder 100 would then be washed after use, for example after a picnic, and saved for reuse.

The invention has been shown, described, and illustrated in substantial detail with reference to the presently preferred embodiment. It will be understood by those skilled in this art that other and further changes and modifications may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention which is defined by the claims appended hereto.

What is claimed is: